



**GORILLA DOCTORS**<sup>®</sup>  
Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project & UC Davis Wildlife Health Center

**2021-2022**  
Annual Report



# Gorilla Doctors' Annual Report 2021-2022

**Vision** A world with a thriving population of wild eastern gorillas

**Mission** To conserve wild eastern gorillas through life-saving veterinary medicine and science using a One Health approach

Gorilla Doctors, a partnership formed in 2009 between the non-profit Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project (MGVP, established in 1986) and the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, is the **only** organization in the world providing hands-on veterinary care to endangered eastern gorillas. Our Rwandan, Ugandan and Congolese veterinarians and technical and administrative staff implement all of our on-ground activities with support of a US-based executive team, the leadership of a Board of Directors, the guidance of an Advisory Council, and the investment of many hundreds of donors (aka you!).

In fiscal year 2021 – 2022, Gorilla Doctors embarked upon a bold and ambitious 5-year strategic plan built upon a 35-year legacy of having a direct hand in the recovery of wild mountain gorillas. Our vision is no less than to position Gorilla Doctors as a **model organization achieving wildlife conservation in the 21st century**. I thank you for your loyal support and invite you to continue with us on our journey to save a species, one gorilla at a time.

## Our Top Three Strategic Goals:

1. Deliver best achievable medicine to eastern gorillas in the wild
2. Lead eastern gorilla health research
3. Position Gorilla Doctors for growth, success, leadership and longevity

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gilardi, DVM, Dipl. ACZM  
Executive Director & Chief Veterinary Officer

P.S. Throughout the report we highlight key moments from our 2021-2022 fiscal year. Enjoy!



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**Dominic Travis, DVM, MS**

At the end of June 2022, the Board of Directors was pleased to announce the following additions to the Board beginning July 1, 2022 for fiscal year 2022-2023 - Elizabeth 'Billie' Grieb, a founding board member of MGVP, returning after a short hiatus and Dr. Jan Ramer, former MGVP regional manager and member of the Advisory Council. Welcome Billie and Jan! Founding MGVP board member, Dr. Rob Hilsenroth, after more than 30 years of service, transitioned from the board to the Advisory Council. Hilsenroth's dedication, service and direct impact on the recovery of mountain gorillas is immeasurable.

# Staff

## DR Congo

**Eddy Kambale Syalua, DVM, MS**  
Head Veterinarian  
**Jean-Paul Kabemba Lukusa**  
Employee Health Program Manager  
**Fabrice Katembo Malonga, DVM**  
Field Veterinarian  
**Jackson Mwenge**  
Administrator  
**Lina Ntuburika, DVM**  
Field Veterinarian

## Rwanda

**Julius Nziza, DVM, MS**  
Head Veterinarian  
**Methode Bahizi, DVM**  
Regional Laboratory Manager  
**Innocent Barimenshi**  
Kinigi Facility Caretaker  
**Joseph Maniraguha**  
Porter  
**Felicien Mulinda**  
Guard  
**Michel Mwemenzi**  
Guard  
**Faustin Nemeye**  
Guard  
**Schadrack Niyonzima**  
Administrator  
**Jean Bosco Noheri, DVM, MS**  
Field Veterinarian  
**Samuel Nshimiyimana**  
Guard  
**Leon Ntahobavukira**  
House Manager & Cook  
**Gaspard Nzayisenga, DVM, MS**  
Field Veterinarian  
**Jean-Claude Tumushime, DVM, MS**  
Molecular Laboratory Technician  
**Clementine Usanse**  
Data Clerk

## Uganda

**Benard Ssebide, DVM, MS**  
Head Veterinarian  
**Nelson Bukamba, DVM**  
Veterinarian, EEIDI Project  
**Deo Mbonye**  
Kisoro Facility Manager  
**Dilly Muhamuza**  
Field Assistant, EEIDI Project  
**Sylvia Nakimera**  
Administrator  
**Fred Nizeyimana, DVM, MS**  
Field Veterinarian  
**Ricky Okwir Okello, DVM, MS**  
Field Veterinarian  
**Isaac Tugume**  
Buhoma Facility Manager & Guard

## USA

**Kirsten Gilardi, DVM, DACZM**  
Executive Director  
& Chief Veterinary Officer  
**Amy Bond, MS**  
Chief Communications Officer  
**Carolyn Forlee**  
Development Assistant  
**Linda Lowenstein, DVM, PhD**  
Veterinary Pathologist  
**Donna M. Platt, MPA, CFRE**  
Chief Development Officer  
**Eunah Cho Preston**  
Marketing & Graphic Design Specialist  
**Denise Raycraft**  
Bookkeeper

# Gorilla Doctors Annual Summary

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

As a loyal supporter of Gorilla Doctors and our mission, you help to ensure the future health of wild eastern gorillas and their Gorilla Doctors in Rwanda, Uganda, and DR Congo. Our One Health approach to life-saving veterinary care and scientific research is highly effective, which has been apparent in the current coronavirus pandemic. In fiscal year 2021 – 2022, **all gorillas that we tested for coronavirus were negative**. Essential to our mission is treating the gorillas in the forest and never removing them from their home environment. Each gorilla we save together remains in the forest with its gorilla family, and that is a **conservation win to be celebrated**.

## Our Gorilla Patients

Habituated Mountain and Grauer's gorillas combined



## One Health for All

**5** Graduate Degree Training  
Gorilla Doctors staff working on Masters or PhD degrees

**52** Events, Presentations & Meetings around the World



## Y(our) Impact

Rwanda, Uganda, and DR Congo combined



**404** Health Checks

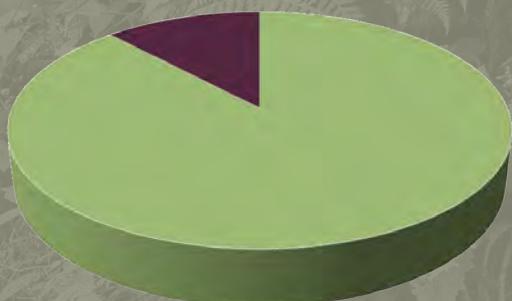
**31** Clinical Interventions

**3** Successful Snare Rescues  
(included in the total of 31)



## Gorilla Doctors Fiscal Health Report

Revenue: **\$2,165,633**  
Expenditures: **\$1,822,717**



## Research in Action

**3** Scientific Publications

**3** Active Research Projects

84% Programs  
 16% Administration

Mountain gorilla, Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, Uganda. **Photo by Skyler Bishop**



**Photo by Dr. Lina**

On July 17, 2021, Drs. Eddy and Fabrice drove from the city of Goma to Kahuzi-Biega National Park, a journey of more than five hours, after receiving a report of a juvenile Grauer's gorilla, Wilungula, caught in a snare. Wilungula's mother Mukono had separated the wire from the stake in the ground but the wire was still wrapped tightly around his left hand. Drs. Eddy and Fabrice were joined by Dr. Lina and the team successfully removed the snare, treated his wounds and performed a physical exam. Wilungula made a full recovery.

Mountain gorilla, Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda. **Photo by Will Wilson**



Dr. Lina Nturubika, one of the first female wildlife veterinarians in DR Congo, was officially hired by Gorilla Doctors in July 2021, following an internship with Gorilla Doctors and training at the Center for Primate Rehabilitation at Lwiro. She hit the ground running in August and hasn't stopped since! Dr. Lina is stationed at Kahuzi-Biega National Park and focuses her work on monitoring and maintaining the health of critically endangered Grauer's gorillas.

**Photo by Will Wilson**

Mountain gorilla orphan, Matabishi, Senkwekwe Center, Virunga National Park, DR Congo. **Photo by Skyler Bishop**



**Photo by Skyler Bishop**

**Gorilla Doctors** was heartbroken when mountain gorilla orphan Ndakasi succumbed to a long-term, intermittent illness on September 26, 2021. Over the last three months of her illness, Drs. Eddy and Fabrice travelled to the Senkwekwe Center, Virunga National Park (DR Congo) to conduct 18 veterinary monitoring visits and perform eight clinical interventions, after which Ndakasi's health would improve for a period of time. Unfortunately, despite the tremendous efforts of both Gorilla Doctors and Ndakasi's caregivers, she passed, and the world mourned with us.



**Gorilla Guardians® champion gorilla health by providing reliable, regular funding to our veterinarians who monitor gorilla health every day. We are so grateful to all of the people who became Gorilla Guardians® during the 2021 - 2022 fiscal year, joining the collective power of a group dedicated to healthy, thriving gorillas in the wild.**

Grauer's gorilla, Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo. **Photo by Will Wilson**

## GORILLA GUARDIANS®

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Mountain gorilla, Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda. **Photo by Will Wilson**



**Photo by Dr. Eddy**

Since November 2021 and during most of 2022, Gorilla Doctors DR Congo team was unable to conduct health monitoring of more than 200 habituated mountain gorillas in the Mikeno sector of Virunga National Park. The park and surrounding communities struggle with safety, instability and violence exacerbated by more than 120 militia groups. M23 rebels occupied areas of the park, making it impossible to safely visit the gorillas. For a brief period in March 2022, rangers were able to reinstate patrols and observed the 10 mountain gorilla groups, but the relative calm did not last long enough for Drs. Eddy and Fabrice to resume routine health monitoring.

Mountain gorillas, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda. **Photo by Skyler Bishop**



**Photo by Dr. Fred**

**Gorilla Doctors**, in collaboration with the Uganda Wildlife Authority, has increased our clinical interventions to treat mountain gorillas in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park that are suffering from heavy parasite burdens. Clinical signs of disease caused by parasites, which we are calling a 'chronic wasting syndrome' (CWS), can include hair and weight loss, browning of the hair and lethargy. With our research partners at the Czech Academy of Sciences, we have been conducting research to better understand what may be causing these heavier parasite loads in Bwindi gorillas.

Mountain gorilla, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda. **Photo by Skyler Bishop**



**Photo by Dr. Noel**

Early in 2022, Dr. Noel performed surgery *in the forest of Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda*. Adult female mountain gorilla, Turimaso, had a lesion on her lip that had been slowly growing over several months. Following the successful removal, samples were analyzed by Dr. Linda Lowenstein, Gorilla Doctors' veterinary pathologist, who determined the lesion was not cancerous and likely caused by a virus. Turimaso made a full recovery.

Grauer's gorilla, Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo. **Photo by Will Wilson**



**Photo by Gorilla Doctors**

**On January 8, 2022, Gorilla Doctors performed our first snare rescue of the year in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda. Dr. Ricky had attempted to remove the snare the day before but aggression from the five silverbacks in the group had made darting impossible. They raced to the forest the next day and despite the silverbacks, steep ravine and dense vegetation, Dr. Ricky and the intervention team successfully anesthetized the blackback, removed the snare, treated his wounds and conducted a physical exam. The blackback made a full recovery.**

Mountain gorilla, Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda. **Photo by Will Wilson**



On March 17, 2022, we celebrated the launch of our new Regional Headquarters (HQ) in Musanze, Rwanda. Along with Board members, donors, past and present staff, and VIP guests from around the world, we were honored to receive commendations from Clare Akamanzi, CEO of the Rwanda Development Board (pictured seated with Board Chair Deborah Dunham). Our new HQ is the first purchase of a permanent location in the organization's 35-year history.

**Photo by Will Wilson**



**Photo by Dr. Ricky**

**On Wednesday April 27, 2022, Gorilla Doctors received an emergency call from Bwindi Impenetrable National Park rangers reporting that a mountain gorilla in Bitukura group had a wire snare around his left forearm. This was the second snare of 2022 and again Dr. Ricky and the intervention team raced to the forest to rescue sub-adult male Nyiguru. They found Nyiguru and his family feeding among bamboo, but he was biting the wire around his wrist, clearly in pain. Dr. Ricky quickly darted Nyiguru, removed the snare, treated his wounds, performed a physical exam and reversed the anesthesia. Then Dr. Ricky watched Nyiguru return to his family. He made a full recovery.**

Grauer's gorilla, Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo. **Photo by Will Wilson**



**Photo by Dr. Fabrice**

In May 2022, Gorilla Doctors welcomed new park leadership at Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo. Kahuzi-Biega is located in eastern DR Congo and home to critically endangered Grauer's gorillas. Eastern DR Congo faces the constant threat of rebel militia activity and regional instability, putting the safety of both our team and the gorillas at risk. Despite that, Dr. Lina works diligently to monitor the health of the largest of the great apes, even helping to habituate Grauer's gorillas during her routine health checks. At times this requires several hours of hiking through dense vegetation in order to find our elusive gorilla patients.

Mountain gorilla, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda. **Photo by Skyler Bishop**



**Photo by Gorilla Doctors**

Use this QR code in case you missed our feature on **60 Minutes** that aired on October 30, 2022. Watch **Drs. Benard and Ricky, and partners from the UC Davis EpiCenter for Emerging Infectious Disease Intelligence, take correspondent Bill Whitaker on a journey through Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda to capture bats (to sample for potential pathogens) and trek mountain gorillas.**



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## Gorilla Guardians®

The list of our 2021-  
2022 Gorilla  
Guardians® is  
featured in the  
month of October.

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Gorilla Doctors is a partnership between Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project, Inc. (MGVP, Inc.) and the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine's Karen C. Drayer Wildlife Health Center (94-6036494). MGVP, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (06-1752363).

# Meet the Gorilla Doctors

Gorilla Doctors works to protect the health of mountain and Grauer's gorillas in five national parks across Rwanda, Uganda, and DR Congo.

## DR Congo



## Rwanda



## Uganda



## Democratic Republic of the Congo

